

session 13: **handout**

RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Adapted from *Facts for Teens: Teen Dating Violence*, NYVPRC, www.safeyouth.org

All kinds of intimate relationships can be abusive or violent. It happens to couples who are married, living together, dating, or even those who have just met, and there's some kind of attraction between them.

WARNING SIGNS THAT A RELATIONSHIP COULD BECOME VIOLENT:

- Your boyfriend or girlfriend pressures you soon after you begin dating to make the relationship very serious or presses you to have sex.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend becomes extremely jealous and possessive and thinks these destructive displays of emotion are signs of love.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend tries to control you and to forcefully make all decisions where the two of you are concerned, refusing to take your views or desires seriously. He/she may also try to keep you from spending time with close friends or family.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend verbally and emotionally abuses you by doing such things as yelling at you, swearing at you, manipulating you, spreading false and degrading rumors about you, and trying to make you feel guilty.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend drinks too much or uses drugs and then later blames the alcohol and drugs for his/her behavior.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend threatens physical violence.
- Your boyfriend or girlfriend has abused a previous boyfriend or girlfriend or accepts and defends the use of violence by others.
- If you're in a dating relationship that in any way feels uncomfortable, awkward, tense or even frightening, trust your feelings and get out of it. It could become, or may already be, abusive.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE IN A RELATIONSHIP THAT IS OR COULD BECOME VIOLENT:

- Accept the fact that the violence will not just stop or go away.
- Accept the fact that you cannot change your boyfriend or girlfriend's behavior by changing your behavior, and that you are not responsible for the abuse.

- Recognize that your boyfriend or girlfriend may need counseling or other outside help to change.
- Seek help. Talk with someone you trust, such as a teacher, a guidance counselor, a pastor, a doctor, a friend or parent.
- Contact the police or a local domestic violence center.
- Call or e-mail the National Domestic Violence Hotline at (800) 799-SAFE; www.ndvh.org

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO MIGHT BE IN A VIOLENT RELATIONSHIP:

- Try to find out for sure by saying something like, "You don't seem as happy as usual" or asking in general terms, "Is there anything you want to talk about?"
- Listen without judging, condemning, or giving unwanted advice.
- If a friend wants help, suggest that he or she talk to a trusted adult or contact a local domestic violence organization. Offer to go along.
- If you believe your friend is in serious danger, talk with an adult you trust immediately about your friend's situation so that you aren't carrying the burden by yourself. Do not try to "rescue" your friend or be a hero and try to handle the situation on your own.

HOW TO HELP A FRIEND WHO MIGHT BE AN ABUSER:

- Talk to the person privately about his or her use of violence.
- Try to get your friend to understand that the behavior is both wrong and illegal.
- Let your friend know that you will not be around them if they continue this.